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A Curriculum for Teaching Talmud

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A CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING TALMUD

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GLOSSARY

Aish. Category of damage in which person starts a fire and fails to control it. "Aish" means fire.

Baba Kama. A volume of Talmud that deals with owner liability for damage caused by one's property. "Baba Kama" means the first gate.

Babylonian Talmud. Traditions, discussions and rulings of the Jewish scholars (third to sixth centuries) in the land of Babylonia, commenting on and supplementing the Mishna.

Bor. Category of damage in which a ditch causes injury or breakage of an object. "Bor" means ditch.

Chavrusa. Study partners.

Ethics of the Fathers. Tractate that deals with the morals for which a Jew must strive.

Jerusalem Talmud. Traditions, discussions and rulings of the Jewish scholars (third to sixth centuries) in the land of Israel, commenting on and supplementing the Mishna.

Kal v'chomer. Talmudic methodology for deriving a law from a given set of facts. the words "kal v'chomer" mean easy and stringent.

Keren. Category of damage in which animal damages with intent. "Keren" means horn.

Mishna. Earliest codification of Jewish oral law.

Odom. Category of damage in which a man damages. "Odom" means man.

Regel. Category of damage in which animal steps on object. "Regel" means leg.

Shane. Category of damage in which animal derives pleasure in the act of damaging. "Shane" means tooth.

Shore tam meshalem chatzi nezek. A term that means that when an animal that has not yet damaged three times damages, the owner is only responsible for half the damages incurred.

Shulchan Aruch. The name of a four-part book, which lists many of the laws of Judaism. The words "Shulchan Aruch" mean the set table.

Sugya. Subject matter.

Sugyos. Subject matters.

Torah. Jewish Bible.

Tractate. A volume of the Mishna or Talmud.

Yeshiva. Jewish seminary.

Yeshivoth. Jewish seminaries.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE TALMUD AND HOW IT IS TAUGHT TODAY

Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishna (a source of Jewish law to be explained later), says that it is a fundamental principle of Judaism that Moses was given the Torah from G-d at Mount Sinai. The Torah consists of five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These five books are known as the written law, because Moses wrote them down according to the word of G-d. On Mount Sinai, Moses also received the oral law, which serves as an interpretation of the written law. It goes into greater detail and explains the commandments more thoroughly than the written law. This interpretation was not written down by Moses; rather, it was passed down through the generations orally.

For over one thousand years, the oral law was passed down from one generation to the next. This occurred until the time of Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi, where in 220 C.E., he wrote down the oral law and called it the Mishna. His rationale for writing down the oral law was that the Roman Empire was spreading its culture rapidly, and he feared assimilation. This was a danger to the Jewish people, as assimilation became a concern. To

ensure that the Jews maintained their values, the oral law was written down, making study of the law easier and more accessible. Another reason for writing the oral law was that Rabbi Yehudah realized that due to the exile of the Jews to every part of the world, it would be necessary to have a written explanation of the oral law to make it possible for Jews everywhere to understand how to properly keep the written law.

The Mishna became a work that was studied diligently in both Babylon and Palestine. In the year 400 C.E., Rabbi Yochanan wrote the Jerusalem Talmud. This was a multi-volume work which discussed and interpreted the Mishna. The discussions documented in this work were of the leading scholars of Palestine. Approximately one hundred years later, Ravina and Rav Ashi wrote the Babylonian Talmud. This was a work in which the elite scholars of Babylon discussed and interpreted the Mishna. In addition to explaining the Mishna, the Talmuds applied laws in the Mishna to all types of religious issues (including moral, ethical and legal) that arose in the time of the Talmud.

The Talmuds were studied day and night by all Jews for many years; however, using the Talmuds for applicable and practical law was difficult, as the scholars of the Talmud disputed on many areas. Each community had a Rabbi who decided on the law for his community.

In 1565, Rabbi Yosef Karo wrote the Shulchan Aruch, which became the standard code for Jewish law and practice. He selected between the different opinions of the Talmud. The Jewish people today follow these rules. Although one only needs to study the Shulchan Aruch in order to

know what the practical law is, the Talmud remains the main source for cognitive and affective development. The Talmud also contains many discussions concerning morals and ethics that are not found in the Shulchan Aruch, which deals only with practical law. Furthermore, even regarding Jewish law, the Shulchan Aruch only teaches the law and omits the Talmud's heated discussions and deliberations between the scholars. Discussing and mastering the Talmud gives a Jew the knowledge of the underlying reasons for each law and develops the mind. It also gives the learner a firm knowledge of Jewish values and morals.[1]

Given the importance that Talmud has for the Orthodox Jews, mastery of the text becomes an important goal. Complete mastery is achieved by few -- only those that give a lifetime to its study. Schools strive as their goal for students of Talmud to achieve competency as independent learners able to go through a text on their own. Coupled with this religious goal is the educational goal to develop the desire within students to engage in this activity on a regular basis throughout their lifetimes.

The standard approach to Talmud teaching is primarily teacher centered. This approach is characterized by the teacher first explicating the Talmudic passage followed by a session in which students review with a study partner the teacher's lesson. After several such lessons, students are tested on the material. This method, when successful, may provide mastery of the specific material covered in class, but it does not provide functional literacy. By

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[1] Maimonides, Introduction to the Mishna, 2.

functional literacy, it is meant the ability to apply study skills acquired in the learning of one passage of Talmud to another. The students utilizing this method will most likely be unable to independently go through the text.

One might argue that this method has been utilized quite successfully for centuries in producing functional literate Jews. However, the circumstances that created this reality were ones in which the students were immersed in Talmud study for as much as seven to eight hours daily over many years. Under such conditions, one gains the skills necessary to learn independently through "osmosis". This kind of time investment is unfortunately not feasible in a day school. An alternative method must be sought which will maximize the relatively limited time appropriated to Talmud study.

It is most common for Orthodox American Jewish boys to travel to Israel for at least one year of post high school Talmud study. The nature of this study is very intense. Students are expected to study difficult Talmudic texts and their commentaries for up to twelve hours a day. In the yeshivot (seminaries) in which they study, the common system of studying is called "chavrusa" in Talmudic terms. In secular terms, it is called the dyads system. This means that two students prepare and analyze a specific text and its commentaries. After several hours, a lecture is given on that topic. During the remainder of the day, the students review the lecture and learn other topics either with the same partner or a different one.

The chavrusa system is based on the presumption that post high school students are capable of understanding the basic translation of the Hebrew and

Aramaic words of the Talmud. After reading through the texts, they should be able to analyze what they have read using the commentaries as their tool for understanding. A problem which has been found among a large number of students is a lack in these elementary skills. There seems to be a deficiency in their knowledge of basic Talmudic concepts as well as vocabulary. Therefore, students struggle to understand the meaning of the basic text and never have a chance to look at the insights of the commentaries. This year in Israel proves to be a year of "catching up" in which students develop their elementary skills. They lose the opportunity to sharpen their minds by looking at the Talmud on a deeper, more analytical level. This results in forever lacking the ability to be an independent learner.

The standard system of teaching Talmud on the high school level is to lecture the students without much student input. This often fails to stimulate interest, or create an independent learner and critical thinker. This inability to develop an independent learner and critical thinker cripples the learner from advancing in knowledge of Halacha and Jewish morals in later years.

Until the French Emancipation, European Jewish communities functioned on a daily basis, autonomously from their non-Jewish hosts. The fabric of their society was woven from centuries of uniquely Jewish values. For the most part, these values were derived from the Talmud and other Jewish texts. Torah, charity and prayer are but a few of the value concepts by which Jews patterned their lives. In contrast, the value concepts of democracy, fairness, individual rights and autonomy are important to the

man of contemporary Western society.

The infrastructure of the Jewish community established tightly secured borders in protecting these uniquely Jewish values. Interaction with the "non Jewish world", on a nongovernmental basis, was not only subject to derision, but was virtually impossible. There was no place for the Jew alongside the gentile.

Not so since the French Emancipation. At this time, Jews were encouraged to integrate with the larger general society. To be sure, this was a long process. Gradually, however, it took hold.

Two important outcomes resulted from the Emancipation. First, the infrastructure of the Jewish community began to decay. The absolute control of the Jewish body politic was no longer in place. A Jew could choose how involved he wanted to be with his Jewish society and to what degree he would attach himself to the non-Jewish world around him. Second, the Jew was now squarely confronted with a different and competing value system. The Jewish value concept of Israel competed with French nationalism. The value of Torah was in competition with the value of universalism. And so it went for many other competing values. The Jew had to determine the worth of these competing value systems and decide which one or which parts were most in conformity with his aspirations. The contemporary Jew is forced to confront this same dilemma. He, too, must respond to the problem of competing value systems.

The Orthodox communities have each responded differently to this challenge. The "ultra-Orthodox" community has decided to maintain itself

as a separate and distinct community, apart from the general society. This group has completely rejected the value system of secular society and isolated itself from its influence. His or her commitment to Jewish law and morals is safeguarded from external pressures.

This is not so for the Modern Orthodox Jew. He responds differently. This Jew straddles the Western world and his Jewish world. He finds positive features within each world and attempts to embrace what is the best of both worlds. However, often these two worlds conflict with the clashing of disparate value systems. The Jew is then required to decide between these two value systems. Sometimes, because of his deep cultural immersion, he is not even aware that this conflict is taking place. Additionally, the Modern Orthodox Jew, in choosing to live with the broader secular society, often falls prey to popular aspirations such as the pursuit of happiness, success, comfort and entertainment which at times conflict with Jewish aspirations.

Orthodox ideology is unequivocal about its full allegiance to Jewish law and values. However, because of the above mentioned factors, many Modern Orthodox Jews approach Jewish law and values with a certain degree of ambivalence.

As will be explained, the process of creating and the creation of an independent learner will aid the Modern Orthodox student to bridge the gap between his Western ideology and the values and laws of his Jewish heritage. The curriculum that the author suggests to implement is based on the theories of the great educational theorist, Jerome Bruner.

CHAPTER 2

BRUNER'S THEORIES ON THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

Jerome Bruner claims that there are four themes in the process of education. The first theme is the teaching and learning of structure rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques. Bruner contends that the first object of any act of learning is that it should serve the learner in the future. One way by which earlier learning serves the future is to render later learning easier. This is accomplished with a firm knowledge of the structure of a topic. Structure provides a general picture of a topic. This allows the learner to move to a deeper understanding of a subject due to his ability to relate things he has encountered in the early stages of learning to things he encounters in later stages of learning. The more fundamental or basic is the idea he has learned, almost by definition, the greater will be its breadth of applicability to new problems.[1] Furthermore, the student who comes to grasp how bits of information within a subject area are related is able to continually and independently relate additional information to a field of

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[1]Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education (Boston: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1960), 17.

study. Hence, an independent learner is created.[2]

Bruner warns, however, that mere presentation of fundamental ideas does not suffice. This is because mastery of fundamental ideas of a field involves not only the grasping of general principles, but also the development of an attitude toward learning and inquiry, toward guessing and hunches toward the possibility of solving problems on one's own. An important ingredient is a sense of excitement about discovery.[3] "Discovery of regularities or previously unrecognized relations and similarities between ideas results in a sense of self-confidence in one's abilities."[4] Facilitating discovery often means allowing the student to discover for himself the generalization that lies behind a particular mathematical operation and the like. This is compared to the average control class, in which the generalization is first stated by the teacher, and the class is asked to proceed through the proof.

Through experimentation, Bruner has seen that developing understanding of structure and, more specifically, in this fashion, has produced a higher level of interest as well as a higher level of conceptual sophistication than that of control classes.[5]

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[2]Allan C. Ornstein and Francis P. Hankins, Curriculum: Foundation, Principles, and Issues (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 101.

[3]Bruner, 19.

[4]Ibid., 20.

[5]Ibid., 22.

At this point, the increased interest in and understanding of a topic have been discussed in regard to structure. Another outcome of understanding of structure which aids us in the future is memorization. Bruner claims that after a century of intensive research, it is clear that unless detail is placed into a structured pattern, it is rapidly forgotten. What learning general or fundamental principles does is to ensure that memory loss will not mean total loss, that what remains will permit us to reconstruct the details when needed. A good structure knowledge is the vehicle not only for understanding a phenomenon now but also for remembering it tomorrow.[6]

Another advantage of understanding the fundamental principles of a given subject is that it serves as a model for understanding other things like it that one may encounter. This is because one's understanding of the subject is not limited to specific inexplicable facts, but to a broad understanding of the foundation of the topic. This broad understanding allows the learner to relate his knowledge of a topic to a different but similar topic. Bruner gives an example:

> If a student could grasp in its most human sense the weariness of Europe at the close of the Thirty Years' War and how it created the conditions for a workable Treaty of Westphalia, he might be better able to think about the ideological struggle of East and West -- though the parallel is anything but exact.[7]

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[6]Ibid., 24.

[7]Ibid, 25.

In regard to facilitating the learning of structure, Bruner says that the instructor must teach the subject in an economical fashion.[8]

Bruner writes:

> Economy in representing a domain of knowledge relates to the amount of information that must be held in mind and processed to achieve comprehension. The more items of information one must carry to understand something or deal with a problem, the more successive steps one must take in processing that information to achieve a conclusion, and the less the economy.[9]

Economy depends greatly on the sequences in which material is presented.[10]

The second theme has to do with readiness for learning. Bruner points out that schools may be wasting precious years by postponing the teaching of many important subjects on the ground that they are too difficult. Bruner contends that the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form. Additionally, with early exposure to concepts, the student in later years can learn, for example, science on a higher level than if he were being exposed to it for the first time. Bruner summarizes the point:

> If the understanding of number, measure, and probability is judged crucial in the pursuit of science, then instruction in these subjects should begin as intellectually honestly and as early as possible in a manner consistent with the child's forms of thought.
>
> Let the topics be developed and redeveloped in later grades. Thus, if most children are to take a tenth-grade unit in

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[8]Jerome S. Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Boston: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1966), 44.

[9]Ibid., 44-45.

[10]Ibid., 46.

> biology, need they approach the subject cold? Is it not possible, with a minimum of formal laboratory work if necessary, to introduce them to some of the major biological ideas earlier, in a spirit perhaps less exact and more intuitive?[11]

The message is clear. Continuity and development are two major features of a Bruner-based curriculum.

The third theme involves the nature of intuition. This is the intellectual technique of arriving at plausible but tentative formulations without going through the analytic steps by which such formulations would be found to be valid or invalid conclusions. Bruner stresses:

> Intuitive thinking, the training of hunches, is an essential feature of productive thinking not only in formal academic disciplines but also in everyday life. The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion -- these are the most valuable coin of the thinker at worker, whatever his line of work.[12]

Ornstein (page 101) explains that intuition is important because it allows the student to make discoveries or add to the storehouse of new knowledge. This is because the learner is allowed to express an unlimited amount of ideas on a subject, opening up the student's mind. This is in contrast to analytical thinking, which proceeds with relatively full awareness of the information and operations involved. This sometimes limits the creativity of the learner who is given a limited amount of information with which to work. Bruner warns, however, that to be an effective intuitive thinker, a broad knowledge base of the given subject is necessary. He also claims that,

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[11]Bruner, Process of Education, 54.

[12]Ibid., 14.

"the teacher who is willing to guess at answers to questions asked by the class and then subject his guesses to critical analysis may be more apt to build those habits into his students than would a teacher who analyzes everything for the class in advance."[13]

Bruner also points out that a different grading standard must be set up to aid the process of intuitive thinking. The assignment of grades usually emphasizes the obtaining of factual knowledge --- that is, the right answer. Although this is very easy to evaluate, it inhibits intuitive thinking in which many a time a wrong answer is the result.[14] Bruner never concluded exactly how to grade intuitive answers. However, it is clear that he felt that to develop intuitive thinking, a different basis for grading must be employed. Obviously, the teacher must know the subject and each individual student well to determine whether the student has given a good guess or not.

The fourth theme relates to the desire to learn and how it may be stimulated. Ideally, interest in the material to be learned is the best stimulus to learning, rather than such external goals as grades or later competitive advantage. However, Bruner maintains that, realistically, complete elimination of the pressures of competition would not be wise.

Bruner contends that on one hand, frenzied activity in the classroom might be stimulating, but on the other hand, leaves no pause for reflection or

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[13]Ornstein and Hankins, Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues, 101.

[14]Bruner, Process of Education, 66.

evaluation. Excessive orderliness leads to boredom and apathy as the student awaits his turn. A teacher must make a balance between these extremes. Bruner adds that schoolwork is only a part of the quickened life of the student. To maintain his interest in addition to good teaching technique, the teacher must instill in the student the attitude that the given subject is worth learning.[15]

Since learning and problem solving depend upon the exploration of alternatives, instruction must facilitate and regulate the exploration of alternatives on the part of the learner. It is the teacher's job to induce the student to explore, maintain the process of exploration(and to keep it from being random. If the teacher succeeds in doing this, the student's desire to learn will be increased.[16]

Finally, Bruner points to the teacher's attitude as a main foundation for the student's interest. Bruner writes: "The teacher is not only a communicator but a model. Somebody who does not see anything beautiful or powerful about the subject that he is teaching is not likely to ignite others with a sense of the intrinsic excitement of the subject."[17]

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[15]Ibid., 77.

[16]Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, 43.

[17]Bruner, Process of Education, 90.

CHAPTER 3

LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING TALMUD

There are three major skills to be acquired along the path of development into an independent learner. The first goal is the development of a Talmudic vocabulary of Hebrew and Aramaic words.

A student can properly understand a Talmudic text only after acquiring a proficiency in Hebrew and Aramaic terminology. This entails more than a perfunctory knowledge of words, but rather a knowledge of tenses and gender. A mistake in translation can change the meaning of an entire passage. When the student becomes familiar with the words and terms used, he becomes more comfortable learning Talmud and the Talmud becomes less intimidating. Familiarity with Talmudic verbiage provides a gratifying and exciting challenge. When this attitude is developed, the student will find studying Talmud more enjoyable and less tedious.

After establishing a good vocabulary, the learner still faces an uphill climb. One can understand a Talmud text only if he grasps Talmudic concepts. There are two basic categories of Talmudic concepts:

1. General concepts needed for any texts; and

2. Specific concepts pertaining to particular texts.

General concepts are composed of principles that Moses received directly from G-d as to how to deduce laws from the Bible. For example, a commonly used concept is a "Kal v'chomer", or in English, a logical proof or contention that can be translated with the idea that if "x" factor applies to "y", then all the more so, it applies to "z". A vivid example of this can be found in the Talmud concerning the requirement to recite a blessing after studying Torah. The contention is that if a blessing is required after eating (Biblical law), all the more so, a person must recite a blessing after studying Torah. The first is only an ephemeral pleasure, the second bringing one closer to spiritual heights.[1]

The second category, specific concepts pertaining to specific texts, refers to concepts that only appear in particular texts. For instance, in Tractate Baba Kama, which deals with owner responsibility for damage caused by one's property, the concept of "Shore tam meshalem chatzi nezek" is widely used. This terms means that an animal that has not yet gored another animal three times obligates its owner to pay only half the damages that the animal incurred. This concept is restricted to Tractate Baba Kama. The student who is familiar with the vocabulary and concepts of the Talmud is on the verge of becoming an independent learner.

Beyond words and concepts, there is a basic flow of deliberation and

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[1]Tractate Berachot, 46a.

conversation in most texts. Familiarity with this flow is the third goal of the curriculum. The Talmud not only states Jewish law, but also documents the discussion of the Sages out of which law was derived. There is a certain flow to these discussions with which the learner must familiarize himself in order to learn a text smoothly. The flow usually centers on the source of or proofs for a law stated by one of the Sages. The Sage states a law or a specific technical point within a law. The Talmud questions the source, and the deliberation begins. Sometimes in the middle of a discussion, the Talmud goes off on a tangent, discussing another matter of Jewish law or a moral issue. The student must be able to determine where the Talmud is headed.

The Lesson Plan

The schedule of a typical yeshiva high school day consists of religious studies in the morning and secular studies in the afternoon. The morning is divided in the following way:

Talmud:	9:15-12:00
Bible:	12:00-12:30 (Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday)
Practical Jewish Law:	12:00-12:30 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday)

(Although Talmud is the source for practical Jewish law, it is replete with moral and ethical discussions. Also, there is much discussion in the process of establishing the law as was mentioned. Therefore, there are books of codified Jewish law which plainly state the law. The students therefore study

these books also in order to learn practical law at a quicker pace than they could learn from the Talmud.)

A typical Tractate learned in yeshivot around the world is Baba Kama. As mentioned before, this Tractate deals with responsibility for damages caused by a person or his animate possessions.

This Tractate is studied on the high school level for the following reasons:

1. It is one of the more thought-provoking Tractates due to the many different cases that the Talmud presents.
2. Through the many cases and classifications that will be explained later, the mind is developed.

The selection of Baba Kama is also advantageous on an affective level. In order to bridge the gap between the text and the student who does not have a prior commitment to it, finding textual selections that are relevant to the student may be helpful. By relevance, the author refers to the realm of meaningfulness. When a dialogue is created between text and student in what is to him significant, the potential for realizing the importance of the text is increased. Confronting the values implicit in the text and comparing and contrasting them with his own values creates an opportunity that evaluation of the text will lead to a conclusion that the text is in fact worthy of consideration and further study. When the student arrives at this conclusion, the gap begins to narrow. When the student recognizes that the text cares about what he cares about, the text becomes meaningful. If the student can be shown that the viewpoint of the text is reasonable, even if it

ultimately opposes his, then nurturing that student's respect for the text and opening up Jewish texts to him as a mechanism for deriving meaning becomes a real possibility.

Tractate Baba Kama is very relevant to the student for it deals with man's responsibility over himself and property from being damaged. Students are concerned with their duty to their fellow man and his property. It is something that affects us daily. It may not be our cow goring another person's animal, but it could be our car hitting the car of another. It is a fascinating tractate in terms of Jewish law and morals. What if a wrecking ball on one's property injures someone else who had permission to be on that property? The implications of all these cases in terms of Jewish law and values, all would agree, are relevant to the students.

These advantages of Baba Kama will greatly aid the attainment of the above-listed goals.

Tractates are divided according to subject matters, or in Aramaic, "sugyos". Each sugya (sing.) varies in length. The first sugya in Baba Kama deals with three issues:

1. The major categories of damage;
2. The sources in the Bible for these categories; and
3. How to categorize specific cases.

Specifying categories is important because different penalties and conditions apply to different categories of damage.

Day I: Major Categories of Damage

9:00-9:30 A.M. At the beginning of the new lesson, the teacher will

present an introduction of the new topic. This entails introducing the basic concepts of the first part of the "sugya".

The first "sugya" introduces the major categories of damage. The first is "shane" or eating. This refers to damage as the result of the animal eating the food of another person. The second category is "regel" which refers to when an animal steps on an object and breaks it. "Bor" or a ditch is the third category. It refers to that situation in which one digs a ditch, in a place in which other people and animals have access, that causes damage. The fourth category is "aish" or fire. This refers to one who ignites a fire and fails to control it, which results in the fire damaging the possessions of another person. The fifth category is "keren" which refers to an animal which gores a person or another animal with intent. The sixth category is "odom" which refers to a person who damages.

New terms appearing in the Talmud are included in the introduction because their function is something we cannot expect the student to ascertain on his own. Therefore, the translation and function of a new term is explained prior to study of the sugya within which it appears. Here, once again, the teacher is careful not to illustrate the term's use with the present sugya so as to allow the student, when preparing the Talmud, to apply its meaning in deciphering the text.

9:30 A.M. The teacher hands out vocabulary lists containing words appearing in the text currently being covered. He also hands out a worksheet to help the students focus on the

main points of the texts.

The worksheet incorporates two essential components. First, it outlines the deliberations of the Talmud. At the beginner level, outlining the sugya is too complicated of a skill at which to expect the student to succeed. Therefore, the proper division between statements within the sugya are provided for on the worksheet. Given this, the student has a good chance at comprehending individual parts of the Talmud. This brings us to the second component of the worksheet which is a systematic method for the student and teacher to monitor comprehension. Its usefulness lies in its simplicity.

It works as follows. After every entry on the worksheet indicating a complete thought in the Talmud, a space is left open for the student to fill in two essential pieces of information without which proper comprehension of the text cannot be assumed. The first is what technically the Talmud is doing, i.e., asking a question, providing an answer or offering a proof. The second is what is the content of the Talmud's statement. This is not meant to be a mere translation of the Talmud. Those already familiar with Talmud study know that an accurate translation of the terse and often cryptic statements of the Talmud does in no way assume proper comprehension of the text's import. This rewrite on the part of the student must incorporate the nuances and material apparently "missing" from the text but essential to its meaning.

Students are expected to fill out the worksheet while learning with their study partners. In this regard, each worksheet is truly a working paper. Students should not be pressured to feel that their worksheets appear perfect

while working on them in preparing the material. The worksheet is supposed to help the student decipher the Talmud. It should always remain secondary to the Talmudic text. To this end, erasures, cross-outs and corrections on the worksheet should be encouraged while the students are working through the text. After the sugya has been concluded in the class, the teacher may want to give the students a "clean" worksheet to rewrite it in a final corrected form.

9:40-11:00 A.M. The students study in dyads (in Aramaic, "chavrusa"). The teacher walks around the classroom to see if help is needed and to stop any idle talk. To maximize learning experience and discourage wasting time, the students must complete and hand in the worksheet.

The teacher must monitor the demand so as to appropriately apportion his time amongst the study partners requiring assistance. The teacher can use the worksheet as a gauge as to how well the students are proceeding in their comprehension of the text.

Another vital component of the teacher's involvement is the way he answers students' questions. It is important for the teacher to direct students to discover the meaning of the text rather than explain the text outright. If a student has a difficulty with the meaning of a word, instead of merely telling him the correct meaning, the teacher can point out what the root of the word is so the student will look it up in the dictionary. Better yet, the teacher can prompt the student to consider the root of the word on his own before sending him directly to the dictionary. This may very well involve trial and

error on the student's part. However, this is the very learning process that Bruner encourages, as will be explained later. By trial and error, the student will learn about Hebrew and Aramaic roots. He will learn what possibilities are reasonable ones and which are not. The next time the student confronts an unknown word, he should be more adept at how to uncover its meaning.

When a student has difficulty with the meaning of the text, the teacher can ask leading questions to help guide the student to the correct interpretation instead of explaining it to him explicitly. This way, the teacher has modeled for the student a way to think through future difficult texts. The student is left with the sensation that he "figured out" the text rather than being "spoon-fed" its meaning. The student is afforded the joyous experience of self-discovery. This experience works in itself as a motivator for future study and future self-discovery.

11:00-11:10 A.M. Break in study.

11:10-12:00 P.M. The teacher asks basic questions on the learned material to evoke student involvement.

For instance, the teacher will discuss why the Torah chose the previously mentioned category heads as the category heads. Are these four cases the most common type of damage? Are they easier to remember? These questions may seem technical, but discussing them will create a bond between them and the students, allowing the students to remember these categories, which is crucial, for these damages are the foundation for the tractate.

A philosophical question should also be asked to help the students

focus attention on the morals that the Torah is teaching us through these laws. How much responsibility should we have over our animals or other potential possessions? How can I take my animal out for a walk if I am responsible for everything it does? It should be made clear to the students that the answer to these questions will become clearer as more texts are learned. From the outset, it is important for the teacher to allow students to freely express their thoughts and feelings even if this leads initially to a critical stance on the Talmudic text. By flushing out the difficulties, the teacher has a better chance of clarifying the actual meaning of the Talmudic text.

Any confusion is addressed at this time. Now that students are sufficiently involved, the teacher models proper reading of the text with the students. The teacher can call upon another student to continue reading or to reread what has been covered to insure that all the students are following the text and are prepared to continue. For homework, the students will study the vocabulary lists of the day for a quiz on the following day.

Day 2: Sources for Major Categories of Damage

9:00-9:45 A.M. The lesson will start with a vocabulary test followed by an oral review of the previous day's material. The teacher brings the Talmud to life -- i.e., presenting a case in which one's neighbor's dog jumps the fence and eats another's tomatoes. The teacher will explain concepts for the new material.

The second lesson deals with the Biblical sources of the types of damage. It is of utmost importance to understand that all oral law is derived from the Bible. If not explicitly stated, many of the laws are hidden in the Bible. The Sages of the Talmud had traditions passed down from Moses how to derive laws and which laws to derive from the Bible. Sometimes the Talmud will document a dispute between two Sages as to the specific source for a given law from the Bible.

Again, vocabulary lists and guidance questions similar to Day 1 will be handed out.

9:45-11:00 A.M.	Dyads (Chavrusa learning).
11:00-11:10 A.M.	Break in study.
11:10-12:00 P.M.	Review (as in Day 1).

Day 3

The first two classes have focused on the basic concepts and categories of damages and their sources in the Bible. Having laid these foundations, the student is ready for application of these categories to practical situations.

After reviewing the previous day's material, the teacher asks questions with which the students can identify, but cannot yet answer. For example, the students know the basic categories of damages, as was mentioned. However, they only know these categories on the most basic level. They know that there is "shane" or eating, "regel" which refers to when an animal steps on an object and breaks it, "bor" or a ditch for which one is liable if it causes damage to an animal or another person and, finally, "aish" or fire, for

which the one who kindles or is responsible for the fire is liable for the damage caused by the fire.[2]

These are the category heads as deduced from the Bible. The Rabbis further deduced subcategories based on the category heads. The Sages understood that the reason the Torah obligated an owner to pay damages was because he was negligent in watching his animals or fire or ditch. Therefore, when the Bible says that one is obligated to pay when his animal enters his friend's backyard and eats his friend's tomatoes, it is because the owner is aware that his animal enjoys eating.[3] Therefore, when passing a tomato patch, he must hold on tight to his animal to ensure that no damage is incurred. From this, the Sages deduced that any time an animal derives pleasure from damaging, the owner's penalty falls in the category of "shane". An example that the Talmud gives for the subcategory of "shane" is an animal that rolls around in a pile of fruit and crushes the fruit. The animal receives physical pleasure by damaging the fruit.[4]

The teacher asks for the students to identify in which category of damages an animal that rolls around in fruit for the animal's comfort, damaging them, falls. The students will most likely guess stomping or "regel", the rationale being that crushing fruit with the animal's body is the closest thing to stomping with its feet. The teacher allows the students to

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[2]Tractate Baba Kama, 2a

[3]Exod. 22:12.

[4]Tractate Baba Kama, 46.

argue among themselves about the answer to the question. The teacher then tells them that the answer will be found in this day's text, which details the foundations of each category of damages. This day's text will focus on "shane" and "regel". The students now break into chavrusa time.

After a break, the teacher reviews the text and then discusses the question that he posed before chavrusa time. At this point, the students have gained knowledge of the subcategories of "shane" and "regel". Therefore, they will answer correctly that the damages fall into the category of "shane" because the animal derived pleasure through his damages.

Day 4

After a review of the previous day's material, the teacher asks the following question: Into what category does the following case fall?

Presentation of the Case

A person leaves out a vessel which, by accident, latches on to the front of his cow. The animal, while walking in public domain, kicks off the vessel, which damages another cow belonging to someone else.

The students may argue amongst themselves, under the teacher's guidance, using leading questions. The teacher informs them that the answer will be deduced from the day's text to be covered during "chavrusa" time. Next, vocabulary sheets and guidance questions are passed out, and chavrusas are formed.

Today's text will discuss the foundations of "keren", "aish" and "bor". Keren, which literally means "horn", refers to an animal which gores another animal or person. Any damage that an animal causes with intent to damage is classified as "keren". As was mentioned previously, anything that falls within "intent to damage" is a subcategory of "keren".[5]

"Aish" refers to fire -- fire is guided by wind. The one setting the fire is responsible for all damage caused by the fire because he knew that external forces, such as wind, will most likely spread the fire. Therefore, any negligence that allows nature (or natural events) to cause damage with your property is in the category of "aish".[6]

The Talmud uses the following example: A man puts barrels on a roof. Since it is conceivable that a normal wind will blow the barrels off the roof, causing damage to another or to another's property, the man (owner) is held responsible.[7]

"Bor", or ditch, refers to a hole that one digs in public domain. The ditch serves as a stumbling block to the public. Any damage it may cause, regardless of the depth of the ditch, obligates its creator to pay damages incurred.[8]

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[5]Tractate Baba Kama, 2b.

[6]Ibid., 4a.

[7]Ibid., 6b.

[8]Ibid., 3a.

A subcategory that the Rabbis deduce from the basic foundation is utensils or vessels left out in the public domain that cause damage obligate the one who committed the act.[9]

The case with which the teacher challenges the students is not mentioned in today's text but in a later text. Though they will not soon see the text, the goal is that they should apply the learned principles to the questions posed.

When one leaves a vessel out in reach of his animal, it is comparable to lighting a fire because the animal's relationship to the bucket is analogous to the wind's relationship to the fire. From this, the student deduces that when the animal kicks the bucket off its foot, causing further damage, it is considered "aish".[10]

When class resumes, the text is read. The teacher continues the discussion, eliciting student response. Some students will argue that this is a case of "keren" since the kicking implies intending damage. But this is not so. We are discussing an unintentional case, whereby the bucket fell off during the course of walking.

Some students will claim that it is "regel", a concept touched upon the previous day, because the animal caused damage in the course of walking ("regel" means leg). This, too, is incorrect, for one of the conditions of "regel", as was discussed, is that the animal must do the actual damage with

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[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., 9a.

its body, or something attached to its body. In this case, the unattached vessel created the damage.

We are, in effect, talking about "aish" in this case.

Day 5

The last category of damages is "odom" (man). Man is responsible for all of his actions, accidental or not. However, when someone causes damage to himself, the damager is exempt. To explain this, if a man goes to sleep next to a lamp placed there by the owner of the lamp, and subsequently kicks it over, thereby breaking it, he is not exempt. However, if the lamp was placed there after he fell asleep, and he damages it, he is exempt.[11]

After the review of yesterday's material, the teacher poses the following question: What happens if a person leaves food in the middle of public domain and someone's animal eats it? The answer is that the loss was incurred by the owner himself and not by the negligence of the animal's owner. (Up until now, we were talking about private property in regard to "shane".)

After sufficient discussion, chavrusas are again formed, and the daily format is used. At this point, at the end of the day, the student has learned that when the damagee has brought the damage upon himself, the damager is exempt. Now this knowledge is applied to the question just asked. The "sugya" is complete. Basic concepts and application have been taught, and _

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[11]Ibid., 32b.

hopefully learned.

Day 6

With the completion of the "sugya" (topic), there is now the need to review. The teacher first reviews yesterday's material. After that, the class forms chavrusas. Today, each chavrusa will review material from the beginning of the "sugya" (Day 1). Study questions are given to each chavrusa, which will work on them until 12:00 P.M.

Because it is the final review of the subject matter, the methodology will be another grouping on a different one. Each chavrusa will be assigned slightly altered. Each chavrusa will be responsible for a different question (in the jigsaw method). For example, one grouping will concentrate on one scenario, a different aspect of the topic. After in-depth study, each grouping will present its findings to the class in much the same way as the teacher presents the material. Each chavrusa becomes the expert and shares the information, thereby making all the groupings expert. Now students are ready to be tested on the topic.

CHAPTER 4

RATIONALE FOR LESSON PLAN BASED ON THEORIES OF BRUNER

The first objective in the above stated lesson plan is to give the student a knowledge of the basic concepts of the "sugya". This follows Bruner's belief that the teaching of structure is a major goal of any curriculum.

The lesson plan calls for the teacher to plant these concepts through the "advance organizer". In this case, it will be achieved through lecture, vocabulary lists and guidance questions and answers. The primary concern behind this model, heavily supported by educational theorist David Ausubel, is to help teachers organize and convey large amounts of information as meaningfully and efficiently as possible. The role of a teacher is to organize subject matter and to present information through lectures and readings. The learner's primary role is to master ideas and information.[1] As previously mentioned, Bruner maintains that a person's existing cognitive structure is the foremost factor governing whether new material will be meaningful and how well it can be acquired and retained. Before the teacher

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[1]Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil, Models of Teaching (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 183.

can present new material effectively, he must increase the stability and clarity of the student's structure. This is accomplished by presenting concepts that govern the information that will be presented to them.[2]

On an affective level, this model facilitates a positive feeling in the student as he has a degree of immediate success in his understanding of the fundamental structure of the "sugya". This creates a desire to explore and learn more about the topic. Bruner maintains that this attitude is crucial in developing an independent learner.

With an understanding of the foundation of the "sugya" and a knowledge of the vocabulary used by the Talmud in the upcoming page, the student is ready to go through the text with a study partner.

There is the assumption that the average Orthodox Jewish American Freshman has attained fluency in reading Hebrew. This weakness, however, is in vocabulary, concepts and reading the Talmud with the proper flow. The advance organizer will help attain the knowledge of vocabulary and concepts, but attaining the status of independent learner is more difficult. This is the challenge to which the curriculum addresses itself. Some will claim that the chavrusa system on the high school level will not be productive, because time will not be maximized; nor will the students be sufficiently stimulated. Furthermore, if they do struggle to go through the text, they will shortly become frustrated and quit since they are not yet sufficiently polished to get through the text smoothly. Rabbi Chaim Cohen contends that, due to

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[2]Bruner, The Process of Education, 14.

television and other distractions, American students would not fully take advantage of the dyads system. Too much idle talk and too many unproductive activities would dominate.[3]

The Talmud states: "G-d created the evil inclination and created Torah as its spice."[4] The word "spice" is understood to mean remedy. Rabbi Moses Rabinowitz states that spice means spice and the meaning is that usually when two people are placed in a room together, there is a lack of conversation. However, if each has a Talmudic text in front of him and they are supposed to study together, the Talmud (Torah) serves as a spice, as they miraculously find idle talk. Although this is just a clever quip on the part of Rabbi Rabinowitz, his idea is that often partners in study waste their time.[5] The Talmud states that wasting time is the worst of all misdeeds.[6]

Despite these claims, the author believes this curriculum must be attempted. This is accordance with Bruner's second theme in the educational process: "readiness for learning". As was previously mentioned, Bruner maintains that any subject can be taught at any level. This is if the teacher allows the topic to be learned according to the abilities of the student, followed by constant redevelopment of the topic.[7] In short, as mentioned

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[3]Interview with author, August 1992.

[4]Tractate Kiddushin, 32b.

[5]Lecture heard by author, December 1988.

[6]Tractate Pesachim, 17a.

[7]Bruner, The Process of Education, 12.

before, the key factor in curriculum construction, according to Bruner, is the teaching of structure. The above stated curriculum stresses structure building and addresses the above mentioned problems. It stimulates the student's interest by presentation of the organizer. Secondly, the guidance questions sheet is due after the chavrusa time, reinforcing the material and obliging the students to concentrate during chavrusa time. Most important are the cognitive and affective goals achieved by this system. Joyce and Weil argue that "practice results in increased efficiency. If we begin learning with partners and simply provide practice for a few weeks, we will find that the students become increasingly productive."[8]

In Ethics of the Fathers, forty-eight conditions for acquiring Torah are listed.[9] Rabbi Elya Lopian explains that acquiring Torah means that one is totally identified with Torah, i.e., that he is like a "walking Torah".[10]

One of the conditions is "dikdukey chaverim", being careful with friends. Rabbi Yaakov Emden explains this to mean studying with a friend, for when one studies with a friend, he feels more relaxed and therefore is more productive than when he studies with a teacher. The productivity will enhance accomplishing the learning tasks set by the teacher and result in the

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[8]Joyce and Weil, Models of Teaching, 34.

[9]Tractate Avos, 6:1.

[10]Rabbi Elya Lopian, Lev Eliyahu (Israel: B'nai Brak Printing, 1977), 21.

creation of independent learners.[11]

The Talmud says that "G-d brings success to two scholars who sharpen each other in Talmudic study." They sharpen each other and gain clarity through drilling each other with questions and their relaxed feelings with each other increases achievement."[12]

Joyce and Weil state, "The interacting with one another produces cognitive as well as social complexity, creating more intellectual activity that increases learning when contrasted with solitary study."[13] This means that the student is more involved and, moreover, an active learner, rather than passive. This heightens the desire of the student to learn. This is yet another one of Bruner's themes.

Another advantage of the dyads system is increased memory of that which was learned. This is because the student is motivated to review. From personal experience, the writer believes that when one plays an active role in studying a Talmudic text and understands it, the person develops a bond with that text which he does not want to lose. This serves as motivation to review. The converse is also true. A person who does not understand the material is more anxious to divorce himself from the text.

As was previously mentioned, chavrusa study has affective benefits as

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[11]Rabbi Ya'akov Emden, Kinyan Keser Torah (Israel: B'nai Brak Printing, 1986), 41.

[12]Tractate Makoth, 7b.

[13]Joyce and Weil, Models of Teaching, 34.

well. Joyce and Weil states, "The synergy generated in a cooperative setting generates more motivation than do individualistic competitive environments."[14] The Talmud supports this, stating that when two people study Talmud together, it starts off as a war. Each partner tries to analyze and interpret the text better (deeper) than his colleague.[15] Much debating and analyzing occurs until the "sugya" is clear to both learners.

This motivation factor is essential for Torah study. When one is motivated to study, learning solely for the sake of learning is a common result, and is a goal for all Jews. As it is said in the Ethics of the Fathers, the one who learns for the sake of learning is worthy for the whole world to have been created for him.[16]

Sharon also supports the theory that the dyads system increases motivation. He claims that "cooperative learning increases learning partly because it causes motivational orientation to move from the external to the internal. In other words, when students cooperate over learning tasks, they become more interested in learning for its own sake rather than for external rewards."[17]

Another advantage in the affective domain is increased self-esteem. ___

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[14]Ibid., 35.

[15]Tractate Kiddushin, 32b.

[16]Tractate Avos, 2:3.

[17]Joyce ands Weil, Models of Teaching, 33.

Joyce and Weil claim that "cooperation increases self-esteem not only through increased learning but through the feeling of being respected and cared for by others in the environment."[18]

The writer knows from personal experience that the satisfaction from attending a lecture is incomparable to the immense satisfaction of laboring over a difficult passage with a partner until understanding is attained. As students make the transition to independent learners, developing confidence and self-esteem is crucial.

Joyce and Weil point out another affective and social advantage of cooperative (chavrusa) learning. They say that "students can respond to experience in tasks requiring cooperation by increasing their capacity to work productively together. The more children are given the opportunity to work together, the better they become at benefitting their social skills."[19]

Sarason complains that schools are boring places for students. This is due to their passive role which makes the classroom an unbridgeable gap between itself and the real world.[20] Chavrusa learning can replace the boredom and bridge the gap.

Furthermore, while the students are studying in dyads, as mentioned, receive direction from the teachers, but not explicit answers. The students

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[18]Ibid., 34.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Seymour B. Sarason, The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990), 135.

use the direction and try to learn the text in a trial-and-error situation. This promotes Bruner's wish for readiness for learning. The students are pushed to accomplish, in ninth grade, the unheard of -- going through a Talmudic text independently. Bruner also believes in the nature of intuition, as mentioned. The students must use their intuition when first going through the text with the teacher's direction. This is because it is only direction, but not explicit answers that they are receiving.

Finally, Sharon and Shaulor carried out a detailed experiment of cooperative learning in which they examined both motivation to learn and academic achievement. They compared ten classes being taught with cooperative learning methods to seven control classes. Motivation to learn was measured behaviorally as a combination of task perseverance, involvement in classroom learning and investment of effort in homework. Achievement was measured in three subjects, one of them being Bible.

The proportion of high, medium and low achievers did not change in control classes in pretesting or post-testing. But in the classrooms with cooperative learning, the jump in the level of high achievers in Bible went from 35% to 50%. Class participation went from 20% in the high category in the pretest to almost 60% in the post-test. The chavrusa system phase of the curriculum is a big stepping stone to attaining the stated affective and cognitive goals.[21]

Bruner claims that the precious early years of a student are wasted ____

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[21]Joyce and Weil, Models of Teaching, 31.

because educators are conservative and do not take chances. [22] Building the cognitive structures that exist in the students and throwing them into the furnace of independent partner learning before their skills are fully developed fulfills the hopes of Bruner.

During the review, one of the students reads the text for the class. The possibility always exists that in the midst of the reading of the passage, the teacher can call another student to continue. This ensures that each student contributes an effort during chavrusa time. Without this procedure, it is possible that one of the partners will do more work than the other. The question sheet reinforces group effort.

On the third day of the lesson plan, the students take a step forward from being gatherers of information to being appliers of information. The students at this point know the basic concepts of damages but do not know how to apply this knowledge to unspecified cases, as was already explained.

The students need more than an introduction this time because the Talmudic text to be learned today will be categorizing different cases. Even with an introduction of the text, they will have to struggle with the new material, which is more complex.

The Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, believed that human beings develop increasingly more complex levels of thinking in definite stages. Each stage is characterized by the possession of certain concepts or intellectual structures referred to as schemes. These schemes are strategies used by

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[22]Bruner, The Process of Education, 13.

individuals as they interact with the environment.

In the course of life, students acquire experience and assimilate it into their present patterns of behavior. The patterns become inadequate as time passes, and new schemes must be developed to be assimilated into newly emerging behavior. The process of assimilation is the incorporation of new experience. Accommodation is changing one's structure to fit the new experiences.[23]

This applies to cognitive growth as well. In the educational goal with which we are concerned, we aim to lead the students to a higher level of thinking and to the ability to apply facts and characteristics of certain events and to categorize them.

Piaget believes that the role of the teacher is to provide a setting in which students construct a higher level of knowledge for themselves through questioning and experimenting. Teachers should refrain from giving answers directly, but should elicit thoughtful responses with good questions.[24]

This is the rationale for the lesson plan for the third class. The student's level of thinking is not yet at the stage where he can answer the question. For example, the student knows when an animal eats, causing damage, it is called "shane". But he does not yet know the subcategories

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[23]Joyce and Weil, Models of Teaching, 247.

[24]Ibid.

applicable to "shane". Therefore, when confronted with the challenge of classifying an animal act in a different context, the teacher is forcing the student to think on a higher level.

Applying Piaget's model of "developing intellect" allows the student to develop his understanding on a deeper level in an active and inductive fashion.

This inductive thinking, Bruner stresses, is an essential feature of productive thinking in everyday life.[25] In the lesson plan, this exercise which evoked inductive thinking was only implemented on the third day of the "sugya". This is because Bruner maintains that inductive thinking is only fruitful when the student is working with a solid knowledge base of the topic.[26]

Another positive outcome of this exercise of inductive thinking is an expansion of the role of the student's thought process. This keeps the student interested and challenged. The satisfaction serves to increase motivation and confidence and the desire to learn more. This achieves one of Bruner's goals: increased desire to learn. Bruner, as previously mentioned, stated that a happy medium must be met between overly controlled classes which lead to boredom, and a classroom that is full of frenzied activity, which tends to get out of hand and to be counterproduc-

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[25]Bruner, The Process of Education, 15.

[26]Ibid., 16.

tive.[27] This inductive thinking model allows the students freedom to express opinions but, at the same time, the teacher is a conductor in control of the classroom and the conversation.

This model will remain the one used for the remainder of the "sugya" as the student progresses from one level to the next in his quest for understanding.

The phases of the lesson plan and the rationale for them is now complete. But we have a larger question before us. Can any curriculum in any area really interest a student?

Sarason writes:

> Our schools in a myriad of ways and with the best of intentions, require the students to make a sharp distinction between "what am I interested in and what am I supposed to be interested in? What am I curious about and what am I supposed to be curious about? What I know, what am I supposed to know, what kinds of questions I'd like to ask and what questions are permissible to ask?" Put more scrutinizingly, schools do a remarkably effective job, albeit unwittingly, of getting students to conclude that there are two worlds -- the one inside of school and the one outside -- and they have no doubt whatsoever about which of the two is intrinsically more interesting and stimulating.[28]

Ultimately, it is the writer's opinion that the students have to recognize the importance of learning in order for the curriculum to succeed. They have to know that the study of Torah is not only important for Jewish law, but for guidance in all facets of life. We as Jews are guided solely by the precepts of

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[27]Ibid., 81.

[28]Sarason, The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform, 154.

the Torah, because it impacts in our everyday behavior. Therefore, it might happen that within the course of instruction, the teacher may have to interject other (but related) matters to facilitate certain attitudes. Time is not readily available for outright lecture.

When students understand the importance of learning Torah and its enormous, constant impact on our lives, then Sarason's concern over the inside-outside school mentality is bridged. This bridge gives the students the attitude that school can be a place where their interests and curiosities can be addressed.

From all the author has talked about, it should seem obvious that Talmud is a very difficult subject to teach and learn. It is vital that the Talmud teacher make the lesson plan as interesting and challenging as he can. As skills develop over the course of the year, routines can be altered. As subject matter changes, it might require less informal instruction and revision in the rigid schedule. No teacher nor lesson should be without the possibility of flexibility.

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